

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

COED YNYS-FAEN

Date of Notification: 1993

National Grid Reference: SO 240194

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 161
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 21/31

Site Area: 7.7 ha

Description:

This woodland is located 1.5 km north of Llangenny, at altitudes between 120-140 metres on moderate to steep south-east facing slopes rising from the Grwyne Fawr. A wide range of brown earth soils, of both high and low base status, and varying degrees of gleying overlie Old Red Sandstone. Coed Ynys-faen is one of the most diverse and species rich examples of alder woodland in Brecknock, with stands of, and transitions to, other woodland types which are also of note. Several uncommon plant species occur within the site.

The complex interplay between the influences of topography and the base status of the flushing water, together with the underlying strata, lead to a similarly complex array of vegetation dominants. Alder coppice dominates much of the wood and exists in a wide range of situations, from silted and vegetated areas of the old river channel, to steep but heavily flushed slopes. Springs, and associated flushing, have a notable influence over large areas, favouring alder in the canopy.

The main canopy associate within alder stands is ash, particularly on the base rich and less wet soils. The shrub layer is mainly of hazel with occasional bird cherry *Prunus padus*, wych elm *Ulmus glabra* and grey willow *Salix cinerea*. Within the rich and varied field layer the most widespread and characteristic species are yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*. In drier alder stands, tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* is abundant, with ferns, particularly lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, frequent. In wetter areas, field layer dominance is often very localised with creeping buttercup and opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* forming a carpet in free draining wet hollows, while water mint *Mentha aquatica*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* are prominent on soft soils heavily flushed by base rich water. This flushing causes slumping on some steeper slopes and here the locally uncommon great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* is found.

The alder stands grade into drier woodland types. On flushed base rich slopes, ash and hazel coppice, is predominant with dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, tufted hair-grass and lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* prominent within the field and ground layers. On soils of lower base status, oak *Quercus spp.* and birch *Betula spp.* attain prominence. Ash remains relatively frequent, and beech occurs locally on free draining soils. Scrub is largely of hazel and occasional holly. Within the field layer, bramble, creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis* and ferns *Dryopteris spp.* are frequent while wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* is dominant locally.

The wood's rich and varied flora includes records for a number of scarcer plants such as herb-paris *Paris quadrifolia*, columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*, rough horsetail *Equisetum hyemale* and sweet cicely *Myrrhis odorata*. The nationally scarce Welsh poppy *Meconopsis cambrica* also occurs here at the extreme south-easterly limit of its native British range.

Remarks:

This site lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

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